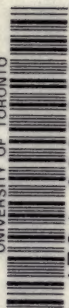


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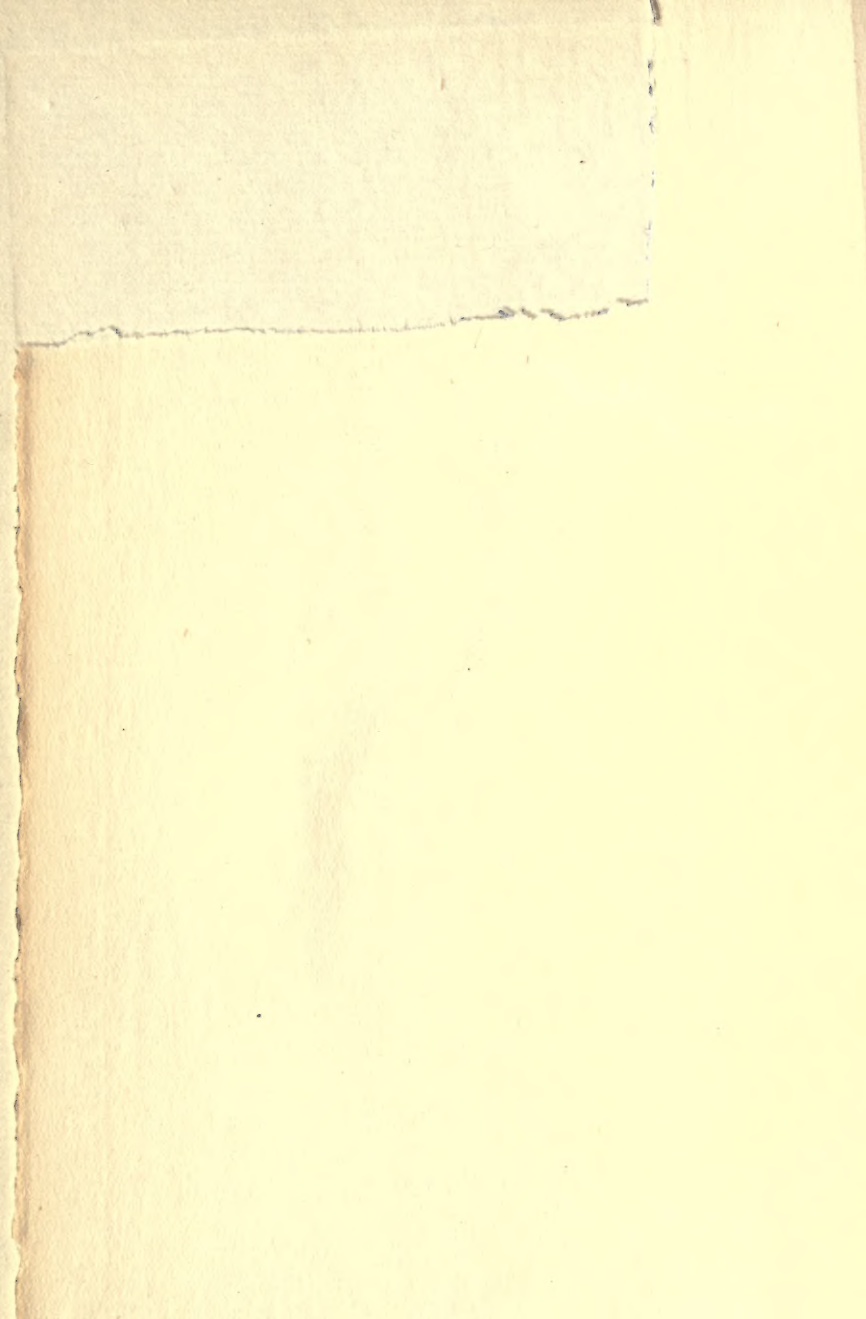
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RTY-ONE POEMS

from J.W.





## THIRTY-ONE POEMS

By the same writer

Boaz & Ruth and other poems 1920

The Death of Eli and other poems 1921

# THIRTY-ONE POEMS

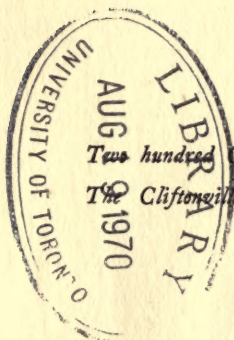
BY A. J. YOUNG

LONDON

JOHN G. WILSON

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*Two hundred Copies of this book were printed by  
The Cliftonville Press Co. in November, 1922*



## *Dedication*

*J.Y., A.J.Y.,  
R.A.Y.*

*Dears, take this little book ;  
Taking it make it ours ;  
Here runs a thin-voiced brook  
Enskying some few flowers.*

*And when from the last hill  
Fades the flame-coloured light  
Dears, will you hear it still  
Singing across the night ?*

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*If passion-haunted nightingale*

If passion-haunted nightingale  
Sing from my lips no more,  
Think not his song should ever fail  
Seeking an alien shore.

If brook that went with talking sound  
Under thy blossoming tree  
Is silent, think not it is drowned  
In an estranging sea.

From celandine that stars the spring  
To orchid's twisted flame,  
In every changing flower I sing  
Thy variable name.

## *Epitaph*

*M.F.H.*

A FLOWER herself to flowers she went,  
Sharer of Beauty's banishment ;  
She left us winter, but to her  
It was the springtime of the year.

## *Spring Song*

LARK sings to sky,  
Thrush sings to tree ;  
O love, my love, to whom should I  
Sing but to thee ?

Blackbird dips beak  
In faery gold ;  
Knew I where such gold to seek  
Seek it I would.

Ivy clings to bole,  
Moss clings to stone ;  
Two hearts make one perfect whole,  
One heart none.

## *The Cherry Tree*

WALKING in dim wood  
Where hides the daytime night,  
Rooted to ground I stood  
Seeing a sudden light.

Is it the sun I see  
Or a white cloud ? Ah no,  
It is a cherry tree  
Laden with laughing snow.

To see that foaming bough  
Think you I was glad ?  
Glad, O yes, glad enough,  
Glad and a little sad.

For to my mind appeared  
(I did but look behind)  
Just such a tree but bared  
Not by earth's rain or wind.

Yet at the spring's sweet breath  
Laughs this light-laden tree ;  
And I stared hard at Death ;  
And did Death stare at me ?



## *Moschatel*

WHEN spring fires with sweet rage  
The breast of singing bird  
And with faint gold of saxifrage  
The dim woods are blurred,

Grows the green moschatel,  
Five heads square-set as one  
Like to that city whereof doth tell  
That saint of God, St. John.

Where are those streets of gold ?  
And who doth walk in them ?  
He that can see one stem uphold  
The New Jerusalem.

## *Absence*

WHERE last night there walked two  
To-night there walks but one.  
You ask, am I alone ;  
Alone, love, but for you ;  
Yes, you and that sweet Venus star  
That signals where you absent are.

Your absent presence here  
Is like this thronging night  
That throws a whiter light  
On each increasing star  
And those white champions that hover  
Mothlike about the night-turned clover.

A mystery ? Ah, no ;  
Love has no periods,  
Your love, my love, nor God's ;  
Is it not always so,  
Love's absence makes us conscious of  
More than could ever present love ?

## *Cuckoo*

Cuckoo, cuckoo !  
Is it thy double note I hear  
Now far away, now near,  
Now soft, now clear,  
Cuckoo ?

Cuckoo, cuckoo !  
Laughs now through the spring's misty wood  
And leaf-winged sap in flood  
Thy mocking mood,  
Cuckoo ?

Cuckoo, cuckoo !  
So sits among sky-tangling trees  
*Our* Mephistopheles  
Singing at ease,  
Cuckoo.

Begone, cuckoo !  
For soon thy bubble-note twin-born,  
Pricked by the June rose-thorn,  
Shall burst in scorn,  
Cuckoo.

## *Downs*

THE weald is well and well enough  
And roads lead everywhere ;  
But when I walk this wind-cropt turf  
I walk three feet in air.

There houses nestle neat as nuts  
And folk like beetles go,  
And grandly the church steeple struts ;  
I hear its wind-cock crow ;

But on these slopes cloud-shadows gloom,  
As over windy Troy  
God-shapes swept by with hastening doom  
For one weak lovesick boy.

There hollyhocks hang out their plates  
And sunflowers with brown eye  
Stare hard across the painted gates  
At every passer-by ;

Here orchids growing free in grass  
And burnet's blossoming stem  
Low curtsey to me as I pass  
And I curtsey to them.



Now God be thanked for these great downs,  
Calm, comfortable, broad,  
Where free from men's thought-tainted towns  
I think God's thoughts with God.

## *Waiting*

WE waited for the spring,  
My love and I ;  
The larks were in the sky,  
The lambs were on the hill ;  
Did we not hear them sing ?  
Did we not hear them cry ?  
Yes, yes, O yes, but still  
We waited for the spring  
My love and I.

We waited for the spring,  
My love and I ;  
Speedwell that robs the sky,  
Trumpeting daffodil  
And blackthorn's blossoming,  
We watched them all go by ;  
These came and went but still  
We waited for the spring,  
My wife and I.

## *The Dark Night*

THAT night was brighter than the day  
Though no moon showed to show my way ;  
Moon's watery beam did I  
Need ? No, nor star-grey sky.

The trees were black as visible death,  
Heavy and black, lacking all breath ;  
No trees I ever saw  
Filled night with so deep awe.

Islanded were they in sea-mist  
Where Love could keep her sacred tryst ;  
Love with no second one,  
But with sweet self alone.

## *Full Moon*

THE raindrops pattered on the trees,  
And yet there was no rain ;  
It was clear moon ; the trees' unease  
Made me hear water plain.

It seemed as lover walked by lover,  
So sharp my shadow showed ;  
We never needed to step over  
The tree-trunks on the road.

So through the night walked three of us  
By earth and air and sky,  
Dim shadow and moon luminous  
And in between them I.



## *A Child Sleeping*

SHE is like the sorrel's white bud  
That grows in a sun-watered wood  
In springtime, opening with brief sun ;  
But whenever the day is done  
Or sky is overcast by cloud  
Quickly her slender head is bowed.

But birds are busy in that wood ;  
They have no time to seek for food ;  
And sluggish and enormous trees  
Pull their green smocks down to their knees ;  
And even the sun, centuries old,  
Renewing youth shakes off the cold.

## *A Child's Voice*

ON winter nights shepherd and I  
Down to the lambing-shed would go ;  
Rain round our swinging lamp did fly  
Like shining flakes of snow.

There on a nail our lamp we hung,  
And O it was beyond belief  
To see those ewes lick with hot tongue  
The limp wet lambs to life.

A week gone and sun shining warm  
It was as good as gold to hear  
Those new-born voices round the farm  
Cry shivering and clear.

Where was a prouder man than I  
Who knew the night those lambs were born,  
Watching them leap two feet on high  
And stamp the ground in scorn ?

Gone sheep and shed and lighted rain  
And blue March morning ; yet to-day  
A small voice crying brings again  
Those lambs leaping at play.

## *The Snail*

I PRAISE the solemn snail  
For when he walks abroad  
He drags a slow and glistening trail  
Behind him on the road.

Clock ticks for him in vain ;  
Tick tick tick—will he run ?  
He hankers not to share men's pain  
Of losing to the sun.

Snail keeps a steady pace,  
Therefore I honour snail ;  
For if none saw him win a race  
None ever saw him fail.

You say, But in the end  
He fills a thrush's throat.  
A life, how could one better spend  
Than for a song's top-note ?

Flesh, sinew, blood and bone,  
All that of me is strong,  
Blithely would I bury in one  
Short-lived immortal song.

## *On the Hill*

ONE, two, three, four—eleven,  
Slowly the church clock beat ;  
I laughed knowing the slope of heaven  
Rolled around my feet.

A thousand flowers were there,  
Rock-rose and tormentil,  
Blue rampion that claws the air  
And rubied pimpernel ;

Great downy-leaved mullein  
Tall as a man can walk,  
Heavy with blobs of gold that climb  
Blossoming his thick stalk ;

Rest-harrow, sage, self-heal,  
Eyebright, squinancy-wort,  
Marjoram that grows too tall  
And thyme that grows too short.

God, as these grasses are,  
(I prayed there) so be I ;  
For them no sad presaging star  
Darkens a flawless sky.

Of death they have no heed ;  
Fruitfully they die,  
Coining in dead living seed  
Their immortality.

## *Childhood*

LISTEN ! As I walked forth to-night  
A strange thing struck my wondering sight ;  
I saw white evening champions blot  
The darkness of the fields with light.

Now seeing these could I not tell  
That, night-diminished, grew as well  
A host of flowers, forget-me-not,  
Foxglove, rose, poppy, pimpernel ?

Flowers of full summer, could such grow  
In budding springtime ? For I vow  
To-day in my own garden-plot  
Snowdrops were sleeping in their snow.



*To A—*

SON, fill thy heart with praise ;  
To praise be added prayer ;  
Irreverent heart makes summer days  
Wintry and cold and bare.

Be thou thy father's son  
True to thy blood and birth  
Not in one single thing but one,  
The love of God's sweet earth.

For when as of one dead  
Men speak my good and ill,  
Yet he could walk, let it be said,  
An Enoch on the hill.

## *Child Love*

Love once but not again,  
Love once and love forever ;  
Twice netted by that trembling pain ?  
Never, O never, never !

This to myself I said,  
And so might well believe ;  
For if all other hopes are dead,  
What hope remains to live ?

Yet love is still my song ;  
And, love, am I to blame  
If love I call on all day long  
But by another name ?

For this new love of mine,  
She is not lightly won ;  
Speak I to her, she makes no sign  
When the last word is done.

Love, love, all day I cry ;  
O love, my love, I plead ;  
She looks at me with silent eye  
And gives no pleasant heed.

But, love, I say to her  
Taking her by the hand ;  
But will she smile ? or will she stir ?—  
She does not understand.

## *The Wind*

Who hath marked the wind,  
Insustantial, sightless,  
Bodiless, unlimbed,  
Colourless and lightless ?

We hear her flapping cloak  
Caught in a trammelling tree ;  
See we an undimmed smoke  
Or a tempestuous sea ?

Rivers lie in bed  
Like sick men all day long ;  
Blackbird hides his head  
Hushing too rapid song ;

Steadfast stands green hill ;  
Sea drags her tidal chain ;  
But wind will never be still  
Nor in one place remain.

Sea-waves run after her  
With a white gift of flowers ;  
And when she is not there  
They wait on her for hours.

She sings so low that scarce  
We hear her or so loud,  
Frightened the moon and stars  
Scurry behind a cloud.

When rushing like a river  
She flows through unbanked air,  
Ecstatic aspens quiver  
And flowers kneel down in prayer.

The wind blows where it lists  
Over this world of ours,  
Sluggish in clinging mists,  
Sudden in kneeling flowers.

## *The Dead Sparrow*

To-DAY I saw a bird  
Lie upturned on the ground ;  
It seemed as though I found a word  
That had no sound.

Quickly once that sparrow  
Flew rising through the air ;  
But quicker flew the flying arrow  
That laid it there.

O strange to see it now  
Lying with sidelong head ;  
Stranger to think it does not know  
Where it lies dead.

That sparrow asks no man  
To dig for it a grave ;  
Gentle is death, I thought, that can  
Both slay and save.



## *Summer Night*

SPEAKS now the silence of the moon,  
A white, silent and lovely speech ;  
With few faint stars the sky is strewn  
Remote and out of reach.

Soft winds that seem born from nowhere  
Pursue the day's last ardent heat ;  
Thin scents stalk lightly on the air  
Setting on flowers their feet.

Black trees stir in their massive sleep ;  
The grass sighs with a great content  
And hawthorn hedges that breathe deep  
Breathe a bewildering scent.

Now, soul, go forth, thou art alone,  
Free at last from day's busy sloth ;  
Moon, stars and flowers, all are thy own ;  
Go forth, night-loving moth.

## *Moth Mullein*

WHAT are those fairy folk  
That fight with spears of grass  
And hang on thy tall stalk  
Stained shields of palest brass ?

A dream ! And what art thou ?  
Burns thy pale-petalled flower  
So ghostly, who can know  
If thou thyself art more ?

## *To a Child*

THERE is a sea between our lips and eyes ;  
No dawn trembles across its star-swept skies,  
And no sharp wing of fork-tailed swallow flies  
    With spring's assurance to our homeland birds.

When I take your two hands in my two hands  
And speak to you, you are as one who stands  
A traveller in new-discovered lands  
    That cannot break to meaning native words.

My warmest kiss falls coldly on your brow ;  
Yet, O my love, kissing you even now  
I saw a half-smile flicker and I know  
    Surely a sail draws within sight of shore.

Love, when I go beyond your sight and speech,  
Making a lengthening water from the beach,  
Will you reach hands, stretching beyond your reach,  
    To touch my hands, drooping upon the oar ?

## *The Stars*

THE stars rushed forth to-night  
Fast on the faltering light ;  
So thick those stars did lie  
No room was left for sky ;  
Seemed to my upturned stare  
A snow-storm filled the air.

Stars lay like yellow pollen  
That from a flower has fallen ;  
And single stars I saw  
Crossing themselves in awe ;  
Some stars in sudden fear  
Flashed down like falling tear.

What is the eye of man,  
This little star that can  
See all those stars at once,  
Multitudinous suns,  
Making of them a wind  
That blows across the mind ?

If eye can nothing see  
But what is part of me,  
I ask and ask again  
With a persuasive pain,  
What thing, O God, am I,  
This mote and mystery ?

## *At Owley*

DEAR, I wished you had been there ;  
It was almost a pain to bear  
The beauty of that place alone ;  
One needed a companion.

You know the hour one trembling star  
Anchors off a black belt of fir ;  
I trembled too, like him unshod  
Who saw the flowering of his God.

And I remember came the thought,  
Should God by act of death be brought  
Nearer than now, might I not die  
Slain by my immortality ?



## *Song*

WITH every sweet apostle,  
That spread the news of spring,  
Linnet, lark and throstle,  
Blackcap and redwing,  
I too began to sing.

Though summer days draw over  
And half the seeds are flown  
And flower by flower the clover  
Drops her dead florets down,  
Withered and dead and brown,

My spring outlasts their summer  
And I am singing still :  
Let birds grow dumb and dumber,  
Of song I take my fill  
By each hedge and hill.

## *Ploughman, ploughman*

PlOUGHMAN, ploughman, hold thy hand,  
Lead back to stall thy clanging team ;  
When poppies nod, leave thou the land  
To sleep awhile and dream.

When apple-scented chamomile  
Strains with her gold breast to the sun,  
Gather thy apples, leave awhile  
The earth to slumber on.

By thriftless thrift men do not thrive ;  
With autumn heat thy horses steam ;  
And O take heed how thou dost drive  
Thy plough across earth's dream.

## *Autumnal*

HANGETH the blue-skinned sloe  
Where blossomed blackthorn once ;  
Thinning their leaves trees show  
Outspreading skeletons.

Foot doth through reaped field stray  
Breaking the sharp brief straw ;  
Hip coffins rose and may  
Smoulders in sullen haw.

Flowers few, too few, remain :  
Of these pink centaury,  
Small flax, lean-stalked vervain  
And blue-wheeled chicory,

Lucerne and melilot  
And the grey-whorled mints  
Mainly I love, but not  
As that ripe cuckoo-pint's

Red-berried stem ; for I  
Seeing those berries clear  
Stand under new May sky  
And Cuckoo, cuckoo ! hear.

## *Sand Strapwort*

WHEN colour lifting from the earth  
Catches from trees a dying birth  
And in the ivy's yellow bloom  
Wasps and blue flies make angry hum,

Here, twenty paces from house-door  
Where men so strangely rich live poor,  
Where few sea-poppies still unfurl  
I set my foot in budding pearl.

Strange joy is mine to know I stand  
Here in one spot of our England  
Where God and the small strapwort strive  
To keep one English flower alive.

## *Late Autumn*

THE blue flax fades upon the wall ;  
Ripen her seeds in hollow ball ;  
Fade too the long-sunned flaxen skies  
And leaf-lit woods full of gold eyes.

Loosestrife bleeds purple in the sedge ;  
Hemp-agrimony topping hedge  
Waves grey and tawdry ; firm and stiff  
Clings the hoar samphire to sea-cliff.

The bindweed that with open bell  
Twined thorn and twined my heart as well,  
Withered and dead now will depart  
Neither from thorn nor from my heart.

Flockwise the delicate swallows sit  
Musing on telegraph wires ; they flit  
Seaward already on the wing  
Tireless of vague imagining.

And I but half-sad turn away  
From this year's faded yesterday  
To kindlier flowers than grow on earth,  
God-planted on my winter hearth.

## *Islands*

THESE new songs that I sing  
Were islands in the sea  
That never missed a spring,  
No, nor a century.

A starry voyager,  
I to these islands come  
Knowing not by what star  
I am at last come home.

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